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SUBJECT: RUSSELL BOTMAN DISCUSSES THE RACE FOR THE WESTERN CAPE

¶1. (U) On March 6, CG and PAO met with Professor Russell Botman, the rector of Stellenbosch University and former Congress of the People (COPE) nominee for the Western Cape Premiership. Professor Botman made news headlines earlier this month when he was tipped as COPE's nominee for Premier of the Western Cape. After much deliberation and media speculation, he declined the offer to run as COPE's candidate for Premier, a move which paved the way for fellow cleric Alan Boesak to lead the party in the province. Botman discussed his decision not to accept the COPE nomination and gave his insights into the election.

¶2. (SBU) Botman told CG and PAO that while he had no personal regrets regarding his decision, he did have regrets for COPE. Botman is a well respected cleric in both the colored and white communities in the Western Cape and COPE hoped that he could capture not only the colored vote, but that of white Afrikaners as well. He said that COPE had been hoping for "white money" and that they hoped to gain white support through his nomination. He added that every time COPE campaigned in white communities in the Western Cape they were told, "you get Botman to run for Premier, then come back and we'll talk." Botman thinks that COPE would not garner much support among the white voters since he is no longer the candidate in the Western Cape and indicated that the party could not win the province without that support base. In addition, he feels he would have been able to beat the Democratic Alliance (DA) by securing the colored vote, but does not see Boesak having the same success as he is too tainted.

¶3. (SBU) Professor Botman believes the DA will successfully secure the colored vote and carry the province, although he said it was more likely that the province will be run by a coalition. The question is therefore whether it will be a DA-COPE coalition, a DA-ANC coalition, or an ANC-COPE coalition. Botman feels that although DA leader Helen Zille is formidable she has alienated many potential partners and burnt too many bridges making it hard for her to form a coalition with any other party at this point. Botman concluded the meeting by saying that South Africa needs an alternative to the ANC which is why he was tempted to take COPE's offer. However, he does not think he could effectively run Stellenbosch University and be involved in politics at the same time and taking Stellenbosch into the future is, at this time, a priority for him. Interestingly he did not rule out the possibility that he may be involved in politics in the future.

¶4. (U) Biographic Note: Botman holds a number of degrees, including a Doctorate of Theology from the University of the Western Cape. He is currently the University of Stellenbosch's vice-chancellor and former president of the South African Council of Churches and has long been involved in the anti-apartheid struggle. In 1989 he received a special award from the Town Council of Milwaukee, Wisconsin as a leading champion for justice. He is a non-Executive Director of Media 24 and Chairperson of the Absa Klein Karoo National Arts Festival and is an internationally-known theologian who has advised the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Geneva on several topics. He has contributed to a number of books and has also published 14 articles in theological magazines and made a

number of contributions to popular journals. End note.